

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Winslow Life Raft Co

Florida Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Winslow Liferaft Company Lands Large Contract Thanks To Lean Transformation

Client Profile:

WINSLOW LifeRaft Company builds the world's best marine and aviation life rafts. These life rafts are used by world-renowned sailing competitors and power boaters, many government agencies, and Fortune 500 companies; they are standard equipment on many yachts and corporate aircraft. The company is located in Lake Suzy, Florida and employs a 75 person workforce.

Situation:

A group of WINSLOW's top managers attended a Lean 101 workshop hosted by the Florida Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Florida MEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate. They realized that WINSLOW's systems and processes could be improved by applying lean techniques, and asked Florida MEP to lead an implementation at their plant.

Solution:

Florida MEP worked with WINSLOW's managers to identify two areas where immediate action would provide the greatest return-on-investment: paper management, and manufacturing operations. Florida MEP began by presenting an on-site Lean 101 workshop, including classroom training and a simulation exercise, which was attended by 20 employees. Florida MEP followed its basic training by conducting a value stream mapping (VSM) event, which identifies high-priority areas for lean implementation and creates a strategic plan for company-wide lean transformation.

Once WINSLOW had targeted key action items, Florida MEP led a kaizen event, in which a team of WINSLOW assembly workers, engineers, and managers implemented lean improvements in the raft assembly area. The team focused on workplace organization, plant layout, batch reduction, point-of-use-storage, kanban, cellular manufacturing, takt time, quality at the source, poke-yoke, and visual factory techniques. The operation realized significant improvements in productivity, and the plant regained nearly 5000 square feet of wasted floor space, which will be used to house a new product line. The company's improvements helped it to land its first commercial aviation contract.

Results:

Improved productivity by 35 percent.

Reduced work-in-process by 35 percent.

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Reduced cycle times by 50 percent.

Reduced space required for existing operations by 45 percent.

Freed approximately 5000 square feet of floor space.

Adding an additional product line without expanding the facility.

Forecasting a 50 percent sales increase in the coming year.

Testimonial:

"The lean transformation allowed us the wherewithal to redesign the physical plant and provide the necessary space to land our first commercial aviation slide contract. We could never have accomplished this without the expertise and assistance of the Florida Manufacturing Extension Partnership."

Allen Goldman, Director of Operations